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ABSTRACT

Four forces seem to be at work in society today that have implications for language teaching. First, the interdependence of planet Earth has become a reality that has increased general awareness of the presence of speakers of other languages among us and awareness on the part of government leaders of the need to encourage foreign language studies. Secondly, the ability to adapt to extreme and rapid change is crucial to the well-being of twenty-first century persons. Learning to express one's thoughts in a new language can be a way of learning to deal with such change. Third, the "return to basics" movement could affect the foreign language program positively if basics are considered fundamental thinking skills. Both experience and research indicate that one learns several cognitive skills in receiving and producing utterances in the foreign language. The fourth force, a pluralistic society, demands awareness of differences and the acceptance and valuing of diversity in people. In language classes students have the opportunity to express themselves and to listen to and learn from others. Whatever methodology is used, the one condition to be reconciled with all four forces is that language must be practiced and used meaningfully, that is, communicatively. How to do this in the classroom is a further question to which some answers are suggested in the concluding portion of the article. (AMH)

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THE ROLE OF FOREIGN-LANGUAGE STUDY IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY*

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Introduction

The role of foreign-language study in the world we seem to be creating—or finding ourself in, depending on your outlook—is not what I consider the most comfortable of topics. It is an intellectual or cerebral topic, rather than a sentimental topic. It is serious, rather than amusing. It is therefore a dangerous topic in terms of speaker-audience rapport. It is also risky from another point of view; it requires looking into the future, and that is not a task for someone who is more inclined to be a cautious scientist. Most of all, it is an immediately frustrating topic, because in my fantasies I want to begin with a compelling new pronouncement as to why every young person in Pennsylvania must learn a second language. I wish this pronouncement were so compelling that it would mean that no one could be happy, prosperous, or even healthy and long-lived without the study of a second language. I would like to make such a statement because in 1977 we language teachers so much want to hear that . . . oh, intellectually, we know better, but, emotionally, we are all so eager, so hungry for the opportunity to end the siege, to breath that deep sigh and say that finally we do not have to spend so much of our professional energy struggling to continue to exist, struggling to attract students, struggling against one more hostile administrative brainstorm.

Of course, we know that no one can make such a pronouncement. Indeed, no science, no religion, no learning, no medicine can offer what our professional hearts want. But does this mean that we are condemned to little more than a continuing struggle just to exist? Do we have to remain a peripheral part of society because we constitute only two hundredths of one percent of the U.S. population? And that is when you count all of us at all levels. Should we accept being rated dead last in the latest survey of what students think is important in education? Should we reconcile ourselves to being perpetually omitted from mention in the Gallup Poll on American attitudes toward education, as occurred in this year's poll published last month [September, 1977]?

That is in my eyes an excessively gloomy portrait—gloomier than, I think, the situation has ever been. The portrait of tomorrow that I would like to create is much more optimistic —not quite the salvation-through-language-study pronouncement we might like, but a picture of an emerging role and respect for language study in late twentieth century education. I believe the forces are right for some important and desirable changes in the next few years, and we must be ready for them. Instead of looking into the future and simply predicting, I hope, therefore, that my approach is more like a careful *analysis of the opportunities* the near-future seems to offer.

I see four forces that seem to be at work in society today and that may have many implications for us—and impact upon us. They are not milestone events that prompt us to dance in the aisles; they seem, rather, best described by the term "force" . . . and they could combine to create in us a force not unlike that of *Star Wars*.

I am very concerned that so many second-language teachers do not feel "the force" is with them. They do not feel proud, confident, or successful in their work. I hope you will each keep in the back of your minds throughout the morning the following question: How do I feel about being a language teacher? Am I proud of what I'm doing in my own little corner of the world? Too often, wherever I go I encounter the "Oh-I'm-*just*-a-Spanish-teacher" syndrome. I hear that in one form or another more frequently today than a few years ago when I first became concerned about it. I think there is reason for us to examine our collective and individual self-concepts. We must each remember "I can't be right for anyone else unless I'm right for me."

The First Force

With that as an ever-present background, the first force to look at is the interdependence of all the planet Earth in 1977. The phenomenon is not new, but it has never before mattered as it has come to matter in the mid-to-late 1970's. It has become a reality that touches so many segments of society.

For example, the number of businesses that are seeking or providing instruction in other languages is rapidly increasing. Teachers in small town after small town tell me of being called by the local employer to be asked whether he or she could translate a letter, an invoice or an order. (As an aside, if you are asked, I hope your charges will be in terms of

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the business sector's value system rather than the benevolent, altruistic values of most language educators.) As another example, there is much more awareness that the people who heat our homes or power our automobiles do not speak English. Ten years ago we expected them to learn English; now we are more likely to *see* that attitude as one of "linguistic imperialism." Or we recognize that in some cases they simply refuse to learn English.

On a theoretical level, who can argue today with the need to coordinate and monitor what has been called our "gross planetary product" —an elaboration of our concept of gross national product? Too often it is characterized by exploitation rather than reasonable sharing for the benefit of all.

Who can fault expanding, orderly, reciprocal trade to minimize the threat of "blackmail" by cartels controlling products ranging from coffee to oil?

Who can fault coordinated attacks on common problems, such as air and water pollution or inflation? [1]

There is a raised consciousness, a new perception of these ideas.

These words "perception," "seeing," "recognition," and "realization" are, I think, especially important here. The reality or fact of the world's interdependence has indeed probably increased a great deal in the last few years, but what has increased even more dramatically is the awareness of it. There has to be a cumulative effect from 210 million people realizing—even in small ways—that what the rest of the 200 billion people in the world think, say, and do makes a difference in their own lives. That is a force. More immediately significant is the realization by our leaders that we all live on a very finite rock. In both the political and economic domains there is genuine concern for our limited national capacity to communicate. I think this concern is going to lead to some actions being taken—probably by the federal government—to improve the status of second-language teaching. The Carter administration, as you know, has created the impression of being supportive of language study. One example of the kind of support and concern by government leaders—an example I just happened to stumble across this summer—is the letter from representatives Claiborne Pell and Dante B. Fascell to the President regarding our compliance with the Helsinki Agreement. I quote from portions of the letter as it appeared in the *Congressional Record*.

> Dear Mr. President: At the suggestion of representative Paul Simon of Illinois, The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe has looked into the question of United States compliance with the section of the 1975 Helsinki Agreement which calls for strengthened educational and cultural exchanges and particularly for increased foreign language study.
>
> The commission has found that the pre-1975 trend toward reduced exchanges and foreign language study in the United States has continued.
>
> This situation is a serious matter in view of the increasing degree of world interdependence and the need for more international cooperation. For example, during the past decade the percentage of our gross national product dependent upon exports has doubled. This means, among other things, the loss of jobs requiring language skills to non-citizens. (There may be 100,000 such jobs in private industry now, and the number is growing.) Finally we are not living up to the commitment to encourage foreign language and area studies which we accepted in 1975 by agreeing to the final act of the conference on security and cooperation in Europe—the Helsinki Agreement.
>
> The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe has therefore adopted a resolution, which is enclosed, requesting you to appoint a short-term commission (to expire six months after the appointment of its members) to prepare a plan of action to reverse this trend.
>
> It is our hope that you and we in the Congress will be able to use this commission to focus national attention on this important problem as a first step in exercising our leadership responsibilities in correcting it. You may wish to consider naming Mrs. Carter to the proposed commission. The example she has set in studying Spanish is a powerful one.[2]

Representative Paul Simon of Illinois, who entered this information into the *Congressional Record*, also said,

> "On June 9, I had the opportunity to discuss this matter with the President and also with Stuart Eisenstat, Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs. Both expressed strong support for encouraging foreign language and area studies in this country and sympathy for the idea of a short-term commission to suggest a course of action to that end.
>
> Mr. Speaker, I am very encouraged by these developments. . . ." [3]

As of this date, authorization for this commission is expected later this fall. [*Editor's note:* see "From the Editor's Desk" in the Fall 1977 *Bulletin*.]

I believe that developments such as this—and I strongly believe there will be more—are manifestations of the force created by the world's interdependence. I do not see that we as language teachers need to take any special course of action. The phenomenon is happening—out there—and it will probably lead to others' turning to us for help in improving the situation. That I think we can and will do willingly. In the meantime, we can of course do our share toward increasing awareness of planetary interdependence. There are quite obviously those who would prefer that it not be the way that it is.

The Second Force

The second force I want to say just a little bit about is more subtle. It is not one that the rest of the world is going to recognize and run

to us to accommodate. It therefore contrasts with the planetary interdependence phenomenon. It is, nevertheless, one of my strongest convictions about language study and is the kind of force that may in the long run quietly but powerfully influence curriculum experts.

Each day in this never constant world each one of us has to face the unexpected, the new, the unfamiliar. More than at any other time since man has inhabited this world, the unanticipated is around the next corner. We all know individuals who just can not cope with the eternal transition. The struggle for roots —in every sense of the term—is very real today. We see difficulty in coping (or future shock) especially as a consequence of technological change and value-system change. Most poignantly, we see it in our parents' generation. Even fundamental institutions are in transition. We have an image of a family, for example, where there is a man who is the breadwinner and his wife who is a homemaker, caring for two children; yet, that now represents only six percent of American households.[4] I am not going to make an extensive list of the many dramatic examples of change that are all around us. We have all heard many times in recent years—since the days of the publication of *Future Shock*—of the growing need to be flexible, adaptive, creative, problem-solving persons. We cannot avoid concluding that the ability to adapt—learning how to learn—is crucial to the well-being of any twenty-first century person, and our students are twenty-first century persons. We know that already in the 1970's total knowledge is doubling every six or seven years. We know that already in the years 1970 and 1974 only one-half the people in this country had the same address as before. There is little stability anywhere. But we know also that we all differ in how we deal with this rapid change and that our ability to deal with it was to a large extent learned. We were not born with "X" amount of it. Schools ought to be involved in that learning, if they are responsive to society. Yet, in many areas of the curriculum students seem to learn the opposite of flexibility and adaptability. They spend their time trying to remember and regurgitate large quantities of rotely learned, fixed, absolute, trivial material.

Are there areas of the curriculum that help students become more flexible and adaptive? Are there activities during a school day that directly engage the student in adapting behavior? Undoubtedly there are some; however, the majority of them seem to deal solely with being flexible in one's value system. But in the foreign-language class the student must set aside something even more fundamental than his or her value system. The learner must set aside his or her way of coding or making sense out of the world. When I as a student must learn to express my thoughts in a *new* language—not in the one I have used to think every previous thought of my life—that requires some extraordinary adapting. What is more a part of me than the way my head works? We forget what is involved . . . we who are so far advanced as language learners. To learn on that first day that a common object has a different name is for the naïve learner important human learning. The student of Arabic must learn to deal with a language that has no verb "to be." The development of flexibility is necessary in order to understand how a language operates—how a speaker communicates—when something so comfortable and familiar is not there. Thus, the foreign-language class can be one of the very few places where a person can practice in a relatively harmless way dealing with the unfamiliar.

One last perspective on the topic: try to imagine an advertisement in *Psychology Today* for a new training program in mental agility. I see a picture of a psychologist sitting with a learner looking at a picture. The psychologist is saying, "This is no longer a dog. It is a *chien*." The next item might be: Here is a preposition *de*; you are going to learn several French sentences in which it is used. Its meaning can be like "from," "to," "of," "out of," "by," "with," or "for." Decide which is closest. I cannot imagine many tasks as effective in developing mental flexibility and agility. This view of language learning was a "cute idea" in many persons' minds when I first proposed it a couple of years ago. I think it has since gained some intellectual respectability, and there is now some supporting evidence.

I would like to approach that evidence from a different point of view. I would like to approach it through a third force, because it also pertains to that force.

The Third Force

The third force is not in fact radically different, but it looks different, and it has a powerful constituency. Today's concern for the quality of education that our young people are receiving is a powerful force. It is often phrased in terms of declining abilities of young people. The situation is a very muddled one, and even the concern is not always logically articulated. We do not have a situation in which our public is saying, "We want better education; go ahead and do what is necessary to achieve it." Instead, they shout "We want better schools" from the picket lines, campaigning against a new school levy that might cost them $100 more a year.

As another complicating matter, it is not clear who or what is causing the ability declines we hear about. Schools? Parents? The three hours twenty minutes per day each young person spends on the average watching

television? Is it less concern with things verbal? The editorial cartoon is skyrocketing in popularity today because people care less about reading.

We hear the concern everywhere. A few weeks ago the College Entrance Examination Board reported that scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Tests not only continued a fourteen-year decline, but were the lowest ever. High-school teachers, college English professors, employers have all joined the clamor of concern about the fact that "Johnny can't read" or "Johnny can't write." We even hear that movie and television producers are shortening sequences because of the decreasing attention span of young people.

In one way or another the common denominator of these complaints is, I believe, concern for why Johnny can't think—especially in verbal modes. There is genuine concern for the intellectual (or, in our terminology, cognitive) functioning of young people—a functioning that we happen to notice most often in reading comprehension and in the ability to put ideas on display in writing.

The typical response to these concerns is an outcry for a "return to basics." That phrase is a part of a powerful force supported by parents, voters, and colleagues in other disciplines. It is especially important for us. It could create a crossroads where we could be diminished as a part of the total curriculum or where we might legitimately create a rationale for being a central subject matter in the curriculum of the next decades.

There is little consensus as to what are *basics* today. To some, basics are obedience, duty, rote memorization, and an emphasis on loyalty and patriotism. Obviously, one cannot fault these qualities as qualities. If, however, they are to form the basis of education, then we must accept certain consequences:

1. They do not imply a kind of education that creates an adaptable person for a rapidly changing world. They become instead a sort of protest against change.
2. They represent a kind of reductionism—a reductionism that leads to a less-diversified curriculum and becomes the argument for those who simply do not want to support education.
3. There are few links between these basics and foreign-language study.

But, if basics include abilities like critical thinking, problem-solving skills, the ability to organize knowledge and code it in words, the ability to see relationships, the ability to structure communication, the ability to separate the important from the less important—fundamental thinking skills—then no area of the curriculum has more to offer than we do!

That is a bold statement. How dare I make it? It sounds much like the nineteenth century faculty-psychology concept of the brain's being much like a muscle that is strengthened and developed through exercise. Yet, with each passing twentieth century day I make it with a bit more confidence.

Last year I devoted hundreds of hours to creating a speech solely about the concept of foreign-language study as brain-training. I believed that it was a reasonable hypothesis—nothing more than an hypothesis. I struggled for hundreds of hours to find supporting data—going back even to Aristotle. Now in less than a year since then I find myself accidentally coming across more new evidence than I had found then by searching. Some of the evidence is soft and only partially relevant, but some is very pertinent. Some of it is in obscure and esoteric journals and reports, but some of it has made the popular press.

In the *Newsweek* article of a couple of weeks ago about the college board panel examining the decline in test scores, some of you may have noticed that there was a reference to foreign-language study—a reference absent in most other news reports:

> Among the findings of the new study were several tantalizing tidbits that the panelists hope will lead to further investigation. Students who had taken several foreign-language courses in high school, for example, did considerably better on the verbal portions of the SAT's than those who had not.[5] [*Editor's note:* see 1977 Fall *Bulletin, ibid.*]

The frustrating part of such evidence is that it cannot show causality. It cannot show that second-language study causes or results in the higher SAT verbal scores. There is the perpetual difficulty of our being an elective subject matter. It could be that students who elect a language tend to have more of whatever the verbal section of the SAT measures than students who do not elect a language. This problem in one form or another will always present research problems. Furthermore, if you are going to make a comparison between foreign-language study and something else, what is that something going to be?

It is because of problems like this that much of the best evidence comes from bilingual situations elsewhere, especially in Canada. Modern evidence dates back at least to 1962, when Peal and Lambert found that the bilingual's

> . . . experience with two language systems seems to have left him with a mental flexibility, a superiority in concept formation, and a more diversified set of mental abilities in the sense that the patterns of abilities developed by bilinguals were more heterogeneous. . . . In contrast, the monolingual appears to have a more unitary structure of intelligence which he must use for all types of intellectual tasks.[6]

To cite a couple of other examples—Cummins and Gulutson[7] recently replicated the

Peal and Lambert study in a western Canadian setting. There the bilinguals performed at a significantly higher level on measures of verbal and nonverbal ability and also on a measure of divergent thinking, i.e., verbal originality.

Also recently, Carringer [8] found that Spanish-English-balanced bilinguals performed at a significantly higher level than Spanish-speaking monolinguals on the verbal flexibility, verbal originality, figural fluency, and figural originality scales of the Torrance tests of creative thinking.

In Australia Boyd [9] concluded that transfer from foreign language did contribute to improved performance in English vocabulary. The study looked at development between year seven and year ten in two Sydney High Schools.

There are several more similar research efforts that I could describe; however, listening to summaries of research is not especially interesting for an audience. I would rather spend four or five minutes describing my hypothesis as to *how* language study influences these kinds of abilities and skills. That is a matter for us to think about, if we as a profession are to make progress toward understanding it someday. Let us first go back to some basics of our own.

Do you stop to think very often of what makes you what you are? Mostly, learning. Each of us begins with a certain genetic potential, but what becomes of that beginning is totally a matter of learning. Yet, we are scarcely aware of learning, perhaps *because* it is so all-pervasive.

Consider, as a borrowed example [10] to dramatize this point, a young couple, new parents, standing proud and hopeful at a hospital nursery window eighteen years ago, making plans for that innocent, sleeping, soft-skinned infant. These parents surely could never have imagined sons or daughters who would virtually live inside stereo headphones, or, more seriously, who would sit, silent, at the dinner table, opening their mouths only to eat or maybe to say, "Do you know how much I hate you?" They would never have guessed back then that today there would be thirteen-year-olds on the pill, a Symbianese Liberation Army, Sons of Sam, and a growing number of youthful suicides.

What has happened during these eighteen years of life is not merely a passage of time and physical growth. What has happened is, in a word, *learning*. Perhaps it was of an unfortunate type, but, nevertheless, it was learning. Some of the learning was in schools; much of it was elsewhere. Some of the learning was planned and structured, but most of it was incidental, unplanned, and probably unnoticed. Some of it occurred in schools, but had nothing to do with the teacher's goals and objectives. Some of the learning was cognitive, informational, or intellectual, and some of it was affective: in the realm of sentiments, feelings, and attitudes. But it was all inextricably intertwined. Learning occurs so consistently and expectedly that we do not see it. It is there as we experience, as we live—an inseparable, unavoidable part of what we do.

Implicit in this innocent-appearing statement is an extremely important idea: we learn what we practice, what we experience, what we do. That is a well-documented proposition. One learns what one does. An aphorism says, "Practice Makes Perfect." Mothers (and some fathers, too) put on their kitchen walls a plaque entitled "Children Learn What They Live" (if a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn. If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient. Etc.).

Given this basic principle, an extremely important question becomes: what kinds of mental operations does one practice while learning a second language? What kinds of mental operations that the brain is capable of doing occur in language classrooms? Whatever these operations are, *they* are what is being practiced and learned. We do not, of course, have very good answers to that question. Our own analytical powers are all that we have available. I myself do find impressive the fact that if one tries to identify verbs of mental operation (or things our heads can do) that are involved in receiving or producing an utterance in the second language, one very readily gets a long list of verbs like "differentiate," "select," "integrate," "categorize," "analyze," "identify," "deduce," "induce," "infer", and so forth. These operations are abundant in second-language learning behavior.

What may also be important is the fact that it is relatively easy to observe or identify these operations while learning a foreign language. They seem much more salient and visible than when learning a principle of physics, a concept of social studies, or a theory from psychology. I am able to observe how well I do them in second-language-learning behavior. We know that abundance and salience are important variables influencing all learning. Thus, it seems plausible to hypothesize that over time one becomes better at differentiating, selecting, integrating, etc., by doing these operations so many times and by seeing how well we do them—by getting feedback about them. The question remains as to how far they generalize: is, for example, learning to differentiate between foreign-language words related to differentiating between nuances of meaning in one's first language, between ideas in advertising, between the relative merits of two insurance policies, or between two similar procedures in one's profession? Skills like differentiating are subtle operations that we must do

repeatedly, in one way or another, all day, every day. The *kind* of skills and abilities that are involved probably varies from very specific operations—perhaps a particular skill like deducing—to a more general capacity like improving the attention span.

Someday we shall undoubtedly understand better these phenomena. We shall have to be patient, however. We are talking about what happens in the brain—a mysterious place where there are 10 billion working parts, a vast place that stores a trillion thoughts in a lifetime, a dynamic place that thinks a billion thoughts a day.

What can we do now? I think we must use our best reasoning and argumentation along with the data that do exist to support and to promote the concept of foreign-language study as a fundamental learning—a genuine basic that seems to improve various diverse cognitive skills involving verbal matter. Moreover, it should be noted that the kinds of skills that have been identified in the research up to this time are those that relate to flexibility and creativity, those qualities I argued earlier are directly related to today's society. Thus, I see resulting from this force a potential role for foreign-language study that has little to do with things international, but rather things intellectual, a role in the basic education of everyone.

The Fourth Force

There is a fourth societal force that I want to say a little about. The concept of cultural pluralism has become to some degree a turbulent reality today.[11] Although the term "cultural pluralism" was used much more frequently during the bicentennial year than it is now, we do, nevertheless, seem to be moving slowly but steadily toward seeing our society as a rich mosaic of cultures, subcultures, and groups, and especially differences among individuals. Diverse values and interests are increasingly seen as a resource that enriches society rather than a nuisance that detracts from it. Individuals are seeking to be more aware of their own unique identities as well as group identities. Consider, for example, the bonanza of tee-shirts on which you print your own message or comment—most of which say in one way or another "I am _____." We find gay-power groups and Ukranian-American groups. At every bookstore there are more and more magazines dealing with personal development and identity. Ethnic magazines are a particularly hot item. In so many types of magazines article after article deals in one way or another with the question "Who am I?" Everywhere we see manifestations of a society saying do your own thing in any legitimate way, be yourself, develop your uniqueness. We see a backlash against the trend at times, but its reality is still strong, whether one likes it or not.

A society that respects diversity — rather than preferring that everyone be assimilated into a single homogeneous type—demands not only *awareness* of differences but also the *accepting* and *valuing of diversity* in people. The awareness that is necessary and the value system that permits me to be me and you to be you— and that still values a sense of community—do relate to our subject-matter area. We have all talked about the discovery that other people, especially in other cultures, carry different realities in their heads. That is an extraordinary bit of learning for a young person —for any person, for that matter. It is probably most easily learned in its most vivid form: differences between cultures. Once tuned in to these differences, a person is more likely to perceive differences in any dimension . . . age, religion, ethnic group, interests, values, etc.

Learning about diversity does not, however, have to involve learning about a culture on the other side of the world. Diversity in people exists everytime you put two persons together. In our classrooms we do not put two together, we put thirty together. Our students can learn a great deal about the diversity in people by discovering the diversity among themselves—students in the same classroom—in a way that does not happen in other classrooms. We teachers have not, for the most part, thought about or capitalized on second-language practice as a means to discovering how people are similar to one another and different from one another. Clearly, one way for us to increase our insights into our own unique natures is by making comparisons and contrasts between ourselves and others. By expressing what we think, feel, or believe about any topic, idea, or item whatsoever and by hearing others express what they think, feel, or believe, we inevitably learn more about what we are and others are. Each of us is, in effect, a composite of our perceptions about everything we have ever directly or indirectly encountered. We have the capacity to symbolize these perceptions in words—words of our first language, or, as we learn them, words of a new language. All that is necessary is the methodology that leads to this kind of language practice—a kind of practice that recognizes the old adage, "Words Don't Mean; People Mean."

I suspect that our students know less about each other than most of us would guess. To adapt Germaine Greer's term, I think they often go to school in "crowded isolation." There are many factors in educational institutions that limit getting to know one another: whole class instruction, desks in rows, a very few minutes between classes, the kind of interaction that characterizes many subject-matter areas where teachers ask questions and students try to guess answers that are already in the teacher's head. In social studies classes they *may* learn what other students see as

valuable in the administration of Truman or Garfield, though more likely they will learn how well their classmates can remember the dates of these administrations. They may learn who can remember definitions of various scientific concepts or how people differ in ability to round off numbers. They *may* get an opportunity to make judgments about Hamlet's actions, but more likely they will merely describe his actions, maybe his motives. Almost nowhere is there an opportunity to express *me*, to say what *I* think, feel, believe about the things *I* know about—the things that are a part of my life. Where do I get a chance to see how others react to an idea that just occurred to me and about which I feel very tentative? Where do I get a chance to see how others react to an idea about which I feel certain? In the second-language classroom a young person can be an opportunity to see how his or her ideas are similar to or different from those of others about "ordinary" everyday items—or about anything at all. Some such items are not legitimate content in other subject-matter areas, but in our classrooms they are legitimized by virtue of being language practice. We can make our content virtually anything in the universe. What freedom! What opportunity that is!

At this point I have led up to the need to talk about methodology. How can these outcomes be realized (if they are not yet being realized)? Before saying a little about what must happen in the classroom to capitalize on these forces, let me summarize what I have said up to this point.

An analysis of the opportunities that tomorrow seems to offer second-language education has led me to four forces that could each in its own way create a new role for our discipline:

1. An interdependent world cannot exist without intercommunication. We develop communication skills.
2. A changing world where future shock is a common problem requires flexible, intellectually nimble people. We provide practice in being flexible and intellectually nimble or agile.
3. An entire nation is concerned with declining abilities, especially verbal abilities. Our subject matter is verbal ability, and there is emerging evidence that we may enhance many intellectual abilities.
4. A society that increasingly accepts and values diversity must have a significant place for a subject matter that deals with diversity and that is at the same time a vehicle for discovering diversity.

What a fantastic contribution to make! Surely, our colleagues in other disciplines cannot offer more.

But how do we do it? Does it happen automatically regardless of what we do in our classrooms? Reason tells us no, quite obviously. If all the student does is write verb forms, the student is going to learn little about his or her classmates. If all he or she does is memorize dialogues or other material, there is little learning to be flexible or adaptable. Can we argue for a particular kind of instruction? I think we can—and I think we can without resorting to the battles over methodologies that characterized the profession of a few years ago. Whatever methodology we use, the one condition necessary to reconcile with all four of these forces is that language must be practiced and used meaningfully—communicatively. It must be for real! These are dangerous words—dangerous because so many of us have so many different interpretations of what they mean. By "meaningful" or "communicative" I mean that the sending or receiving of the message (either orally or in writing) must make a difference. There is some sort of change—however small—that results from that speaking, listening, reading, or writing. Something is known or experienced because of it. If I ask you what color my suit is and you say it is brown, we have not really used language to make a difference. We all knew it was brown before. It did not matter that we went through the charade with words about its color. For most of us this distinction is a very elementary one. Yet, there are still many language classrooms in 1977 where students are told they will someday be able to communicate, but they never, never do. It is only a promise—and, tragically, an unkept one. The student never deals with or processes the meaning of the language forms he or she is working with.

Let me relate the idea to some research in psychology. In verbal-learning research there has been a fair amount of work with what has been called "levels of processing." A typical experiment might involve the experimenter's giving three different groups of people the same list of words. Each group, however, is given different instructions: one group is told to circle all the E's in the words on the list. The second group is told to copy all the words, and the third group is told to identify all the words that pertain to the concept "government." After completion of the task the lists are taken away, and the subjects are asked to write down all the words they can remember from the list. Language teachers' intuitions should match the results. Invariably, the third group that had to deal with the meaning performs the best; the E-circling group, the worst. The explanation is in terms of depth of processing—the deeper one processes, the better the learning. In other words, the more one relats the material to one's attitudes, ideas, or experience—all that is in one's head—the better it will be remembered.

In the language classroom I am afraid that too often our students spend a preponderance of their time "circling E's." In one way or another, an enormous amount of time is spent in purely mechanical tasks that involve no more processing of meaning than does circling E's.

Let us look at a few examples, which show, I hope, the contrast between what we frequently do and what we might consider doing—between activities that involve shallow processing and those involving deep processing.

I see classes where students are learning the indefinite article and probably at the same time the concept of gender. Because this concept is usually taught within the first few days of instruction, students are also learning vocabulary and pronunciation. One common activity I observe is repetition or the reading of a list of nouns with the article. Perhaps it is chorally; perhaps the instructor goes from student to student asking each to read the next four or five items on the list: "A chateau, a desk, a bicycle, a museum, a book." In such classes students are not expected to say something important; they are expected to say "nothing" correctly.

My version of such an activity might involve giving the students a list of nouns—not exactly the kinds of nouns in most textbooks of the past but nouns that could be possessions. My task,[12] then, might be something like this: "If you could own or have only five of these items, which would you like to have?" Each student would give his/her choices, "a stereo, a porsche, a bicycle, a beer, a good book, a record by the Eagles, etc." The practice with the indefinite article still occurs; but meaningful processing, attention to meaning, also occurs, as does a lesson in individual differences. Even though the students are contemporaries of one another, there is a great deal they do not know about each other. Therefore, the reactions around the room in thirty other heads are of the type "I never thought he would have chosen that," or, "That's interesting; she chose the same things I did." I submit that these awarenesses are important in our kind of pluralistic society. I submit also that this kind of practice involves the full range of intellectual skills that can be involved in second-language learning. It is not "restricted" in behavior the way, for example, a pattern drill is.

Let us look at another example. Later in instruction when students are learning imperatives, instead of giving them a list of statements—declarative sentences—which they are to change to commands, why not give them a list of imperative statements that represent advice to new students. For each one, the task is to decide whether or not it is good advice, and if the student doesn't think it is good advice, she or he is to change it so as to make it good advice. I might then give the students mostly "bad advice" statements. For example:

1. Begin studying at midnight.
2. Spend your time creating good excuses instead of studying hard.
3. Don't disagree in class; the instructor is always right.
4. Be alert in class on Friday afternoons to impress your instructor.[13]

Let us look at one more example at a more advanced level of instruction: let us assume that students have read a story or article about how France has become the number-one country in the world in per capita possession of pets. Essentially, then, it is an article about the French and their pets. Many of us might create or might utilize a true-false activity in which students were to indicate whether the statement was true or false according to the information in the reading. That activity can involve a kind of meaningful processing of the content, it is true. However, a slight variation could make the activity more meaningful on a personal level. Instead of the alternate choices of true or false, why not make them "agree or disagree" and make the statement more value-laden? They can still emphasize the same vocabulary and structural patterns. For example:

— Domesticated animals are happier than wild animals.

— Animals exist to serve man.

— It is cruel and selfish to tame wild animals.

— It's normal to have a dog or cat eat at the table with you.[14]

Students might then also be asked to change or rephrase statements they disagree with so as to make them fit their own opinions. Again, such an activity becomes a magnificent lesson in individual differences. I as a student not only learn what others think; I also formulate what I think—which I might not have done if someone had not prompted me to think about the particular issue. Moreover, I have used the full range of intellectual skills that can occur in second-language practice.

I fear we all have too often deemphasized the meaning in language. We tend to be fascinated by the grammar of a language. When the student must add meaning to the forms—to the grammar—the result is synergistic. When meaning is absent, all we have left—all that any language is—is a series of grunts, sniffs, croaks, and puffs. That is not very interesting, and it does not relate at all to the force. Use of language with meaning is a concrete behavior that we can all increase everyday. It may seem small, but it is not. It is a force in and of itself. May the force be with you.

16

Notes

[1] Adapted from Harold G. Shane and David L. Silvernail. "Foreign Language Study for a World in Transition," in *The Language Connection: From the Classroom to the World.* ACTFL Foreign Language Education Series, Volume 9, June K. Phillips, ed. Skokie, Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1977.

[2] *Congressional Record: Proceedings of the 95th Congress, First Session,* Vol. 123, No. 100, June 10, 1977.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Kenneth Keniston. *Report of the Carnegie Commission on Children,* 1977.

[5] Merrill Sheils. "Why SAT Scores Decline," *Newsweek* 90, X (September 5, 1977): 82-83.

[6] E. Peal and W. E. Lambert. "The Relation of Bilingualism to Intelligence," *Psychological Monographs* 76 (Whole #546), 1962. Reprinted in R. C. Gardner and W. E. Lambert, eds. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House, 1972.

[7] J. P. Cummins and M. Gulutson. "Some Effects of Bilingualism on Cognitive Functioning," in *Bilingualism, Biculturalism and Education,* S. Carey, ed. Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 1974.

[8] D. C. Carringer. "Creative Thinking Abilities of Mexican Youth: The Relationship of Bilingualism," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 5 (1974): 492-504.

[9] Rachel Boyd. "Influences of Foreign Language Study on English," *Babel* April 1977: 19-22.

[10] Adapted from Joyce Maynard. "The Monster Children," *Newsweek* (July 26, 1976): 10-11.

[11] Adapted from Gilbert A. Jarvis. "The 200th Year: More Need Than Ever Before for Foreign Language Study," *The Modern Language Journal* 60 (1976): 240-47.

[12] Adapted from Gilbert A. Jarvis, Thérèse M. Bonin, Donald E. Corbin, and Diane W. Birckbichler. *Invitation: French for Communication and Intercultural Awareness.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, in press.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] Adapted from Gilbert A. Jarvis, Thérèse M. Bonin, Donald E. Corbin, and Diane W. Birckbichler. *Vivent les différences: An Intermediate Reader for Communication.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1977.